



A shelter is a place with the feel of a home where those who have experienced domestic violence or have been threatened by violence can stay regardless of disability

thl.fi/turvakotipalvelut

Persons with disabilities as victims of domestic violence

WHAT?

Persons with disabilities experience more violence than those without disabilities

For example, young people with disabilities are twice as likely to experience physical violence inflicted on them by parents or other adults who care for them. Violence is not always taken seriously when it is experienced by persons with disabilities, and when they seek public services, they also often fall through the cracks.

Recognize that persons with disabilities also experience domestic violence and guide them to the shelter services, if necessary. Find information about the vacant shelter places and the accessibility of shelters from a nationwide Nollalinja helpline tel. +358 80 005 005 and [Nollalinja.fi](https://nollalinja.fi).

WHY?

Everyone has the right to a life free of violence

Persons with disabilities must be protected against all types of violence. Dependence on next of kin and people offering assistance, impediments to self-protection caused by the disability, and a lack of knowledge of one's own rights and boundaries, are examples of factors that can make the disabled more vulnerable.

Authorities are bound by the

- Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other
- UN human rights agreements, which also impose a legal obligation to pay special attention to multiple vulnerability, such as being a person with disabilities and a woman.

HOW?

Learn about the violence experienced by persons with disabilities, and its special features

- Note that the violence experienced by a person with disability is often committed by someone who is next of kin, or a helper. Make sure that the client can speak freely without the presence of the perpetrator of the violence. A person with disability might also require an auxiliary device for communication, or the services of an interpreter.
- The persons with disabilities have not always had sex education, or they might lack knowledge of their own rights and limitations. Create confidence in personal boundaries and rights.
- Take up the subject of domestic violence. Persons with disabilities do not always recognise the violence they experience. Talk about the different forms of violence. Ask directly if the client has experienced violence and what form the violence has taken.
- Guide the client to get help. A disability or physical limitation must not be an impediment to getting help. Do not leave the client alone.
- Evaluate the accessibility of the services and make the necessary changes or suggestions for change. Listen to the client's point of view.

Additional information

Shelters are open 24 hours a day, every day of the year

Shelters for victims of domestic violence are free of charge and no referrals are needed. Those who have experienced domestic violence or have been threatened by it will get a safe temporary residence, professional help, advice and guidance, as well as assistance in stopping the violence. Violence does not need to be physical. It is possible to come to a shelter alone or with children.

The persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group

- The individual situation and needs of each client are assessed at a shelter. The client's own starting points and capabilities are considered in the work.
- The shelter is obligated to arrange interpretation if it is required for working with a client. If the client has a personal assistant, the assistant may come to the shelter if the client so wishes.
- Service dogs and guide dogs are welcome at shelters.
- Shelter employees have been trained on the special features of violence experienced by the persons with disabilities.
- The costs of travelling to the shelter are primarily the responsibility of the client. If this is not possible, and if safety requires, the shelter can compensate the travel costs of the client after evaluating the situation.



Around 15 percent of the population live with disabilities.



Some special features of violence experienced by persons with disabilities

The special features of violence can emerge in different ways, depending on the disability, the degree of the disability, or physical limitation. Other individual factors that might be linked with violence also need to be considered, such as

- leaving a person in an insecure state, or withholding assistance
- neglecting treatment or care
- threats of institutionalisation
- damaging or taking away auxiliary devices
- manipulating medication
- crushing self-esteem by mocking the disability
- disparagement, overprotection, or imposing restrictions
- targeting the disability itself with physical violence.

Further information

Handbook on disability services
nollalinja.fi/turvakoti
thl.fi/vakivalta

Contact information

Joonas Peltonen
Development Manager, Government services
firstname.lastname@thl.fi, turvakotipalvelut@thl.fi
Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare
thl.fi | [@THLorg](https://twitter.com/THLorg)